CHAPTER I.

The milkman left a can of milk on the front veranda and drove on to the next house in the street. The iceman came along half an hour later, looked curiously at the closed door, as he unfastened the hooks from a block of ice, and rapped loudly on the step, but no one came to answer his call.

An hour later a young man sleeping in the front room downstairs awoke suddenly and sat up in bed. He was astonished to note that the sunlight on the carpet extended from the window far into the room, indicating that the sun had risen above the tall buildings across the street. He felt a strange heaviness in his head, and a desire to lie down again, but he shook off the feeling and rose and began to dress.

What could be the matter? The little clock on his dressing case pointed to ten. What had caused him to oversleep? Why had Mr. Strong not waked him as usual? The old man was always up with the sun, and had never allowed him to sleep later than eight.

The young man hurriedly put on his trousers, thrust his feet into his slippers, and drew aside the portiere that hung between his room and his uncle's. Strong's bed was in the righthand corner of the room, and Whidby could see the back part of his head and one side of his gray whiskers.

Whidby called to him softly, but Strong did not stir. Whidby called again, and stamped his foot, but still the old man remained motionless.

"That's queer," murmured Whidby, as he approached the bed. Strong's face was towards the window; his eyes were open; a ghastly smile was on his face. He was dead. Whidby saw that by the awful pallor of his face, which made each hair of the beard stand out as if under a magnifying glass. For a moment Whidby stood as if turned to stone; then he drew down the sheet, which had been drawn up closely under the old man's chin, and saw the long deep gash in the throat and the dark clots of the blood which had soaked into the mattress.

Whidby was strangely calm. In an instant he had decided on a course of action. He stepped to the telephone across the room, and looked over the directory; then he rang, and held the receiver to his ear.

"Hello," he said, "that's the central office, isn't it? Well, all right; one seventy-six on four eighty-two, please."

"Well, what is it?" presently came from the telephone.

"Is that police headquarters?"

"Yes."

"I am Alfred Whidby, 278 Leighton avenue. A horrible thing has occurred here during the night. I have just discovered that my uncle, Mr. Strong—Richard N. Strong, the banker—has been murdered. Come and attend to it."

There was a silence, broken by a low, indistinct murmuring as if people were talking at the other end of the wire; then the reply came:

"All right; as soon as we can get there."

Then Whidby hung up the receiver and rang the bell. He went back into his room, put on his shirt, collar and necktie, and brushed his hair. His head still felt heavy and ached a little. The electric cars were whirring past the house, and a blind man was playing an accordion a few doors away. There was a crunching step on the graveled walk near his window. Whidby raised the sash and looked out. It was Matthews, the gardener.

Seeing Whidby, he touched his hat, stopped, and asked after Mr. Strong. Whidby made no reply, but sat down on the window-sill and stared at the old man. He was wondering if the police would prefer for him to keep the news from the gardener. It was the look of slow astonishment coming into Matthews' eyes that made him decide what to say.

"Matthews," he said, "something has happened; I can tell you that much, but that is all. I have telephoned the police; you'd better not come in till they get here. If I were you I'd go on with my work; the rose bushes near the fountain need trimming."

Matthews stared and started to speak, but Whidby withdrew, sat down on the side of his bed and tried to collect his thoughts. Suddenly he was roused by a sharp ring at the door bell. Whidby's heart sank, and he was all in a quiver, but he rose calmly and went to the door. It was a boy with the morning paper. He held also a bill in his hand, and wanted to collect the money due to him for delivering the paper for the month past, but Whidby sent him away, and stood for several minutes in the doorway watching the crowd passing in the street. Then he closed the door, and went into his uncle's room and walked restlessly to and fro at the foot of the bed. Suddenly he stopped at the telephone and rang the bell.

"One seventy-five on four eighty-two, please," he said.

"Hello there," was the reply.

"Well?" said Whidby.

"You are one seventy-six instead of one seventy-five, aren't you?"

"Yes. Did I say one seventy-five? I meant one seventy-six."

"All right; there you are, Mr. Whidby."

"Whidby!" thought the young man. "I wonder how he knew my name. Ah, he must have overheard me speaking to the police."

The bell rang.

"Hello," said Whidby. "Is that police headquarters?"

"Yes. What is it?"

"This is Alfred Whidby, 278 Leighton avenue—"

"I know; but what is wrong now?"

"I telephoned you about the murder up here. Aren't you going to send some one to see about it?"

"That was only a few minutes ago, Mr. Whidby, and it is over two miles. Capt. Welsh has just left with Mr. Minard Hendricks, the famous New York detective, who happens to be in town."

"Ah, I see," said Whidby; "the time drags with me, you know. I am all alone."

"I understand. Good-by."

"Good-by."

The young man turned and walked round the bed for another look at Strong's face. Surely, he thought, that weird smile and the twinkle in the dead man's eyes were the most remarkable things ever connected with a murder case. He could not bear to look at the face, so he went into his own room. He wondered what had caused him to oversleep. He went to his bed and smelt the pillows to see if he could detect traces of chloroform. He had decided that he could not have been drugged, when the bell of a passing car caught his ear. He knew that the car had stopped in front of the house by the whirring, chromatic sound as it started on again. Then he heard steps on the veranda and went to the door.

CHAPTER II.

It was Capt. Welsh, the chief of police, and Mr. Minard Hendricks, the detective from New York. The latter scarcely nodded when he was introduced to Whidby. His sharp, gray eyes, under massive, shaggy brows, rested on the key which he had just heard Whidby turn in the lock.

"Has no one been out at this door this morning?" he asked, abruptly.

"No," stammered Whidby—"yes; that is, I came to answer the ring of a newsboy a moment ago."

"And you locked the door after he left?"

"Yes."

"Why did you do it?" The detective's eyes were roving about the veranda, hall and yard, but his tone sounded sharp and to the point. Whidby felt that he was waiting for a reply.

"I don't know," replied the young man, helplessly. "I suppose I was excited, and it seemed to me that it would be best to keep curious people out till you came."

"Certainly," replied Capt. Welsh; but the detective went on with a frown:

"Was the door unlocked when you opened it for the newsboy?"

"I—I'm afraid I can't remember," answered Whidby.

"That is unfortunate," said Hendricks. "Where is the body?"

"This way," replied Whidby. "The second door on the right."

The detective opened the door, and the others followed him to the bed. He looked long and silently at the face of the dead man; then he said: "Has anyone touched this sheet since you discovered the murder?"

"I drew it down to see where he was wounded. If I had thought—"

"No matter," replied the detective, and he lifted the sheet and examined the gash. Then he replaced it carefully, and asked: "How was the sheet arranged when you found him?"

"Just as it is now, I think," said Whidby. "Just as if the murderer had replaced it with both hands, one on each side, as you did."

"Stand where you are," Hendricks suddenly ordered. He raised the window-shade, went down on his hands and knees, and made a minute examination of the carpet. Then he rose and surveyed the room. "Where did you sleep?" he asked.

Whidby pointed to the portiere. "In that room."

The detective drew the heavy curtains aside.

"You came through here this morning?" he asked.

"Yes."

Hendricks looked at Whidby's bed.

"Slept later than usual this morning, eh?" he asked.

"Yes; I don't know what was the matter with me. I felt heavy-headed and dizzy when I awoke."

Capt. Welsh nodded knowingly, but said nothing.

"You telephoned as soon as you discovered the body?" Hendricks went on.

"Yes."

"Where do you get your meals?"

"Here, usually; but to-day the cook is away on leave of absence. Uncle and I were going over to the Randolph, the restaurant on the corner, for our meals till she returned."

"Have you eaten anything this morning?"

"No."

"Well, you'd better go; we'll look after everything and telephone the coroner."

"All right," replied Whidby. He turned to the wash-stand and filled a basin from a pitcher of water. "In my excitement I forgot to wash my face and hands."

"Stop!" cried Hendricks, and he caught Whidby's arm as his hands were almost in the water. "Pardon me, but you've stained your fingers somehow."

The young man stared at his right hand in surprise. There was a faint red smudge on the thumb and fingers. "Why," he said, "I don't see how it could have got there, unless— I wonder if—" Whidby turned quickly into the other room and bent over Strong's bed. "Ah!" he cried, to the others. "See! I must have got it from the corner of the sheet when I put it back; you see there is blood on the under side."

The detective had followed Whidby no further than the portiere, where he stood indifferently watching the young man's movements.

"Yes, from the sheet or this curtain," he replied, pointing to an almost invisible spot of blood on the portiere.

"Then the fellow must have been in my room, too," said Whidby, wonderingly.

"And just after the deed was done," Hendricks remarked.

The young man stared at the detective curiously as he returned to the washstand and took off his coat. "Look," he cried to him, "here is some of it on my cuff."

"I noticed that," replied the detective. "It is a drop of blood. Perhaps you had better detach the cuff and give it to me. You did not sleep in that shirt?"

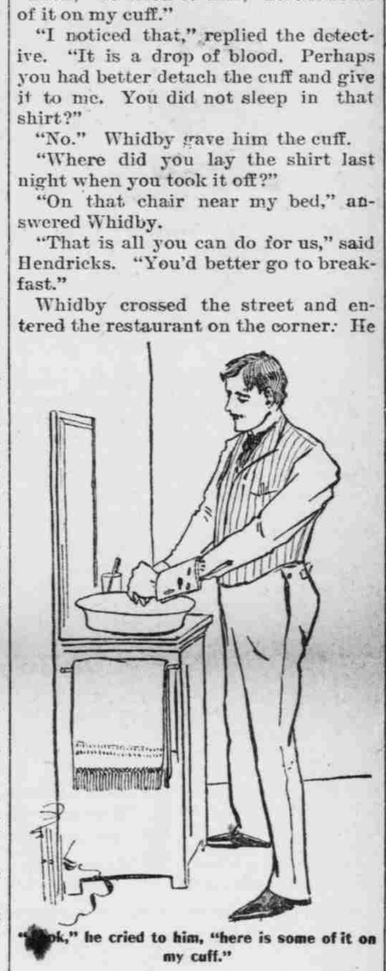
"No." Whidby gave him the cuff.

"Where did you lay the shirt last night when you took it off?"

"On that chair near my bed," answered Whidby.

"That is all you can do for us," said Hendricks. "You'd better go to breakfast."

Whidby crossed the street and entered the restaurant on the corner. He



"Look," he cried to him, "here is some of it on my cuff."

took a seat at the table farthest from the door and ordered some eggs, coffee, rolls and butter; but he found that he had no appetite, and he drank his coffee when it was so hot that it burnt his lips. Then he bought a newspaper and sat for ten minutes gazing at it absently.

On his return home he found the yard filled with a crowd of curious people. Some of them stood on the veranda near the windows. The door was closed. Whidby tried the knob, but it was locked. Turning, he saw Matthews coming round the corner of the house.

"Capt. Welsh asked me to send you in at the rear door," the man said. "They're goin' to hold a inquest on 'im."

Whidby followed the gardener into the house. How he disliked to see the body again, and the strange smile on the dead man's face! But there was no help for it. He must do what he could towards bringing the criminal to justice.

The atmosphere of Strong's room was so close that Whidby could hardly breathe, and the perfume from the conservatory sickened him. The coroner and his jury had arrived. Indeed, they seemed to be waiting for him. He sat down near a window. He wondered what they would ask him, and if he could make intelligent replies.

The coroner opened the proceedings with a few words to the jury, and Whidby thought they stared at him furtively whenever his name was mentioned. Then his testimony was called for, and Whidby felt that he was repeating word for word the account he had given Hendricks a short while before.

The detective rose next and told in careful detail how the police had been called to the telephone by Whidby and first informed of the murder; how the young man had met him and Welsh at the door, and what was said about whether the door was locked. He spoke of the blood stain on Whidby's hand and produced the cuff with the drop of blood on it. It was his opinion, he said, that the cuff could not have been worn at the time it received the drop, nor for at least half an hour afterwards, for, as the jury could see, the blood had dried in such a shape as to prove that it had remained motionless for some time. Mr. Whidby had said that the shirt with the cuff attached had lain on a chair near his bed all night.

Then the coroner called for Whidby's nightshirt, and the jury passed it from one to the other and examined it carefully. At that moment Whidby rose to call attention to the blood on the portiere and on the corner of the sheet, which he thought Hendricks and Capt Welsh had forgotten to mention, but the coroner ordered him, rather coldly, to sit down.

Matthews was next called, but he could testify to nothing except that he slept in the cottage behind the house and had not waked during the night. Then the coroner requested Whidby and Matthews to leave the room, and Whidby went into the library across the hall and closed the door behind him.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

THE LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEER.

His Sweetheart's Red Hair Acted as a Signal in Time of Danger.

A locomotive engineer should be one of the most truthful of men. That's why this little story of a southern engineer should be believed implicity.

"You may talk as you please about red-headed women," he was saying to a group of listeners, "but a red-headed woman saved my life and established a home for herself all at once. I was 25 then and running a freight on the Chesapeake & Ohio in the West Virginia mountains, where it took talent to run an engine. My division ended at Hinton and a red-headed girl lived six miles to the east, where there was a siding near a big cut and fill, and it was a bad place, as the road was new.

"The girl's name was Maggie Conroy and she had the reddest head I ever saw on a human being's shoulders outside of a torchlight procession. But I didn't care for that and I did care for Maggie. One sunshiny day I was coming down the track with a stock train loaded with some extra fine cattle and sheep and I had in the caboose three of the owners. It had been raining and washouts were looked for, but I hadn't seen any and was bowling along at a good speed when all of a sudden at the curve I thought I saw a red light rising just over the track. It seemed to shine like a blaze in the track and before I took time for a thought I had shut off the steam, whistled down the brakes and was doing my best to stop.

"Right then my fireman gave me the ha ha in a way to chill the blood in the veins of a man who can't stand teasing and I took a look forward and found that the red light I thought I saw was only Maggie's head of red hair sticking up in advance as she pulled herself up the steep embankment to get on to the track. With an oath I opened everything again, but as I did so Maggie threw up her hands and dropped in a dead faint by the track and I stopped off everything again, for I felt sure that something was wrong. I had half an hour or so leeway between trains and I took Maggie up as quickly as I could to find out what was the matter. She came around mighty soon, because she had fainted from overexertion, and she told me how a big bowlder had fallen on the track in a curve near her house that I wouldn't have seen till it was too late to stop and she had run across the spur of the mountain to stop me in time if she could.

"That's what she was trying to do when her red head shone like a danger signal and stopped me. Later the owners of the stock gave her money enough to buy a nice little house at Hinton and six months later I moved in. We've got the house yet, but we don't live in it," concluded the engineer, "for it wasn't big enough for a family of six children and not a red-headed one in the lot."—Washington Star.

A YOUTH'S REPLY.

Its Quiet Dignity Discomfited a Proctor's "Bulldog."

The Union Debating society, of Oxford university, has disclosed to many a man the possession of that gift which enables him to think on his feet and to express his thoughts so that those who listen may be impressed. It has trained statesmen, preachers and teachers so to lift up their voices that the world heeded their message.

When the union began its life the university dons pounced upon it, as "likely to lead young men to form premature ideas." Having at first no habitation of its own, it used the rooms of the students. On one occasion, while Samuel Wilberforce, subsequently the eloquent bishop, was speaking, one of the proctor's assistants—"bulldog" is his college name—put in an appearance and said:

"Gentlemen, the proctor desires that you should disperse and retire each to your own college."

The chairman, named Patten, rose with dignity and with the calmness of a speaker of the house of commons and said:

"Sir, the house has received the proctor's message and will send an answer to the summons by an officer of its own."

The chairman's quiet, dignified attitude prevented the union from ever being troubled by the proctor's "bulldog." Doubtless, to many of our readers it will recall the attitude of that speaker of the house of commons who, when commanded by Charles I., seeking to arrest five members, to point them out, replied that "he had neither eyes to see nor tongue to speak, save by command of the house."

English blood has the habit of reasserting itself, now and then, boiling up as does the great geyser of the Yellowstone park.—Youth's Companion.

In Doubt.

A certain minister, who is not always so careful as he might be in making his teachings and his practice correspond, was lately telling some friends a story of adventure. It was a pretty "tall" story, and the minister's ten-year-old girl was observed to be listening to it very intently. When he finished, she fastened her wide-open eyes upon her father's face, and said, very gravely: "Is that true, or are you preaching now, papa?"—Household Words.

—Man, if you are anything, walk alone, and talk to others. Do not hide yourself in the chorus.—Epictetus.

ARCTIC HOMING PIGEONS.

Andree Not the First Person to Take Them to the Far North.

Writers for the contemporary press who have recently treated of Andree's essay to reach the north pole in a balloon appear to have forgotten—if, indeed, they ever knew—that carrier pigeons have previously been taken to the arctic regions by other explorers, and that in one instance it is believed a bird made its way south to its old home in Scotland.

When Sir John Ross set out in the Felix, in search of Sir John Franklin's expedition, in 1850, he took with him four homing pigeons belonging to a lady in Ayrshire, intending to liberate two of them when the state of the ice rendered it necessary to lay up his vessel for the winter, and the other two when he discovered the missing explorer, if he should be so fortunate.

A pigeon made its appearance at the dovecote in Ayrshire on October 31, which the lady recognized by marks and circumstances that left no doubt in her mind of its being one of the younger pair presented by her to Sir John. It carried no billet, but there were indications, in the loss of feathers on the breast, of one having been torn from under the wing. Though it is known that the speed of pigeons is equal to 100 miles an hour, the distance from Melville island to Ayrshire, being in a direct line about 2,400 miles, is so great that evidence of the bird having been sent off as early as October 10 was required before it could be believed that no mistake was made in the identification of the individual which came to the cote.

It was afterwards ascertained that Sir John Ross dispatched the youngest pair October 6 and 7, 1850, in a basket suspended from a balloon, during a west-northwest gale. By a contrivance of a slow match the birds were to be liberated at the end of 24 hours. The reader can form his own opinion as to the identity of the pigeon in question; but, at the time, it was fully believed that the bird was one of the two sent off from the expedition in Melville bay.

The expedition fitted out by Lady Franklin in 1851, which sailed in the Prince Albert, under command of William Kennedy, took a number of homing pigeons. It reached Upernavik on June 10, and, after taking on board some Eskimo dogs, set out to explore the shores of Prince Regent's inlet. The much-dreaded "middle ice" was reached soon after leaving, and four days were spent in passing through it to the western side of the bay, during which time the men were constantly employed in sailing, boring, pushing, warping, not infrequently exposed to the perilous "nips" which are sometimes productive of dire consequences. At this point in the voyage it was deemed advisable to test the powers of the pigeons, but the poor birds refused to take the long flight to England, and resolutely persisted in returning to the ship again and again after a short survey of the icy region in which they were let loose.—Boston Herald.

TEACH HISTORY FROM A TREE.

London Museum Has a Section of Trunk 533 Years Old.

At the Natural History museum in South Kensington there is a section of polished Douglas pine large enough, say, to make a round table to seat a dozen persons. Instead of making it an object lesson in botany, the museum authorities have ingeniously chosen it as a medium for the teaching of history. The tree was cut down in 1885, and as the age of a tree can be inferred from the number of rings which its cross section discloses this one must have been 533 years old. In other words, it was born in 1352, and it lived through the most interesting part of English history—from Edward III. to Victoria.

It is therefore a simple matter to mark different rings with their dates and the names of the events that were happening while they were being born. This is what has been done—from the center of the tree in two directions, right away to the bark. The markings, which are neatly executed in white paint, reveal some interesting facts. Thus, when this pine was four years old, the battle of Poictiers was fought, in 1356; when it was 25 Edward III. died. It was 119 when Caxton introduced printing, and when Columbus discovered America it was 140. When Shakespeare was born 212 rings had already made their appearance; when Raleigh settled Virginia, 240. Fifty years later Sir Isaac Newton was born. When the great fire of London was raging this venerable specimen could boast 314 rings, and 80 more when the battle of Culloden was fought.

It had reached the remarkable age of 424 when American independence was declared, and the yet more remarkable age of 485 when Queen Victoria ascended the throne. And even then it had a long time yet to live. Evidently there is something to be said for the theory that the more we vegitate the greater are our chances of longevity.—London Mail.

Freaks of the Frost.

"Yes," said the red-faced man; "I've been up in Alaska for over a year. Great Zero! but it's cold. Moonbeams used to freeze and stick out on the earth like bristles till the sun had been up for hours. But there was one thing about the cold that was rather funny."

"What was that—freeze so the circulating medium couldn't circulate?"

"No; it was this way: Along in the winter when a man would try to speak, his words would freeze as fast as they came from his lips. But that isn't the queer part. Along about June they would thaw out and nearly scare people out of their overcoats."—Puck.

Might Have Done Worse.

"It was brutal of Nero to fiddle while Rome was burning."

"I don't know about that; suppose he had played an accordion?"—Chicago Record.

A LITTLE NONSENSE.

—Good Reason.—"And why did she choose him among so many admirers?" "The others did not propose."—Brooklyn Life.

—"They have discovered a lake up in Alaska that is teeming with fish." "Eh? I thought they did all their teaming with dogs."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

—"My Freddie rode like lightning the first time he got on a wheel." "You are fibbing!" "Not a bit. Doesn't lightning go in a zigzag?"—Fliegende Blatter.

—He—"I saw you out driving yesterday with a gentleman. He appeared to have only one arm; is that all he has?" She—"Oh, no; the other one was around somewhere."—Yonkers Statesman.

—"When I went abroad I intended to write a book called 'My Experiences with Old Ocean.'" "Well, did you?" "No; after my voyage I concluded to call it 'Old Ocean's Experiences with Me.'"—Chicago Record.

—Not a Diplomat.—"You never tell me that I look young and sweet any more," pouted Mrs. Lovelace. "No," her brute of a husband replied; "I seem of late to have lost my powers of imagination."—Cleveland Leader.

—"What are the 'Powers' of Europe?" inquired the very young woman. The veteran diplomat looked at her thoughtfully and then replied: "For a long time past they have been chiefly conversational Powers."—Washington Star.

—"Well, well," said the old friend. "How did you ever come to join the Salvation Army?" "It was the only way," the young man admitted, "that I could get the public to submit to my cornet-playing."—Indianapolis Journal.

—Mrs. Younglove—"Does your husband give you a regular allowance, or how do you arrange it?" Mrs. Loudvoice—"An allowance? No; he doesn't give me an allowance. I buy his street car tickets for him, and we let it go at that."—Cleveland Leader.

WHAT WARSHIPS COST.

It Means a Big Bill When They Are Fairly Afloat.

Growth in dimensions, speeds, protection and armament has necessarily been accomplished by increase in cost. In 1637 the Sovereign of the Seas cost £41,000, half of which was for labor. This was quite an exceptional outlay and, no doubt, other than legitimate expenses were charged against that vessel. At the beginning of this century a 100-gun line of battleship cost from £65,000 to £70,000, exclusive of armament. The 121-gun sailing three-decker of 1837 cost nearly £120,000, and the screw three-decker of 1857 about £220,000.

The use of armor added greatly to the cost and the Warrior of 1859 figured up nearly £380,000. The Dreadnaught of 1873 cost £620,000, and the Inflexible, which followed her, cost £810,000. These large amounts were partly due to the introduction of costly mechanisms required for mounting and working the heavy guns and partly to large increase in the outlay of armor.

Then came the reaction in favor of less costly ships and vessels were produced for £600,000 to £650,000, between 1875 and 1885. The inevitable tendency reasserted itself in 1885, the Nile and Trafalgar each costing about £850,000. The Royal Sovereign class of 1889 cost about £775,000, and the Majestic about £840,000. All these figures are for ships built in the Royal dockyards, and exclude incidental charges as well as cost of armaments. They include gun mountings with their costly mechanisms and torpedo gear.

Cruisers have similarly increased in cost. The Blake cost about £440,000, or about twice as much as the unarmored Inconstant, laid down in 1856. The Powerful will cost about £680,000. She carries a considerable weight of expensive armor and gun mountings costing over £50,000.

Other navies spend even more on their units of naval force. A French first-class battle ship costs about £1,000,000 and so do the corresponding ships in the Russian and Italian fleets. The American battle ship Indiana cost over £600,000, exclusive of armor, and that involved an expenditure of nearly £340,000. For the German battle ships now building, of which 11,000 tons, the estimated cost is about £700,000. It will be seen, therefore, that British battle ships are, in proportion to their dimensions, less costly than battle ships of other navies, and actually less costly than most foreign battle ships of about the same date.

The same thing may be said of cruisers. The French Jeanne d'Arc is estimated to cost about £800,000; a German first-class cruiser about £650,000, and the American New York cost, exclusive of armor, etc., about £600,000. The actual cost of the great Russian cruisers is not known, but must reach high figures.

As compared with the costs of the largest passenger steamers the foregoing figures, no doubt, will appear very large. But if deductions are made for the expenses incurred on armor, gun mountings and mechanisms, torpedo gear and special fittings, representing together, say, £350,000 to £400,000 in a first-class battle ship, the comparison is made fairer and the warship approximates in cost very closely to the largest passenger steamers.—Sir William H. White, in Cassier's Magazine.

Ancient System of Charity.

A regularly organized system of relieving poverty has been in vogue in China for more than 2,000 years. It is said that an organized system of charity prevailed among the Egyptians 2,500 years before Christ.—Chicago Inter Ocean.

An Irish Verdict.

"My lord," said the foreman of an Irish jury, when giving in his verdict, "we find the man who stole the mare not guilty."—Tit-Bits.